

T.M.G.I.!

(TOO MUCH GREAT INFORMATION!)

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As you review the article "The Growth of Chiropractic and 'CAM'" in this issue, you will read so much interesting information that you may have to read it twice (or more) to get it all. The article attempts to summarize two studies, and incorporates three tables and five graphs. These studies have produced the most exciting research findings of the year.

Together, the two papers provide a mountain of evidence that chiropractic (and other forms of alternative care) has been growing over the last 50 years and is expected to grow bigger and faster in the future. The paper serves notice to the medical establishment that they are no longer the dictators of health care, but one member on a health care team that includes chiropractic and several other alternative care providers.

The hard part when reading this much great information is remembering to keep it all in perspective. As a team member, chiropractic has to consider how its future action will be interpreted by other health care team members and the consumer. For our profession to grow, we must appeal to more and more patients. That takes a concerted, conscientious educational and informational effort on the part of every doctor of chiropractic to both the public and all other health care providers.

Perhaps it's time we ask ourselves a few tough questions:

1. Are we clear enough about who we are and what we do, or do the same terms and philosophical differences that hamper our unity also hamper our efforts to communicate with potential patients and other providers?
2. Have some of the profession's actions appeared to be self-serving rather than patient-centered? This is exactly the problem hampering political medicine, and one we need to learn from early.
3. How do we open our hands to individual providers who want to work with their local chiropractors, while still keeping a raised fist in the face of the political entities that would take away our rights and even our existence?
4. What can we do to build alliances with other health care professions? Which professions should we ally with, and how strong an alliance should we build?
5. Does chiropractic work well when combined with all other health care disciplines? Or are there certain competing/conflicting therapies/philosophies that are generally incompatible?

6. Where do we draw the line in determining which "copycats" to fight? Can we do so on the basis of philosophy, education, scope of practice, or some other means?

7. Will our lack of unity continue to slow the growth of chiropractic? Or could it even stymie that growth altogether?

Good news is always good to hear, and these two studies are no exception.

But if they tell us anything, they speak to the potential of the profession. They let us know that we can continue to grow and affect the lives of more people in our respective communities. Chiropractic can reach a far greater percentage of the U.S population, but then again, so can a number of other alternative forms of care.

Chiropractic is entering a new level of respect and maturity as a profession. Many of the old issues are passing away, being replaced by new challenges. And while some of our methods of advancement have changed, our dedication and determination will have to remain focused.

This doesn't mean that we have to re-invent chiropractic. But it does mean that where we focus and how we move forward must be considered in light of today's health care marketplace.

The chiropractic profession has stood up to and defeated the discriminatory practices of organized medicine. It has opened the minds of the public to consider the advantages of nonmedical health care. And in so doing, the American public is now sampling an entire spectrum of "alternative" care provided by various health care professions and providers.

Care must be taken to insure that our position as the leaders of the health care revolution is not forfeited. As health care moves to the next level, chiropractic must position itself as a reliable member of the health care team while retaining our wellness leadership.

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